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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: SHOOTING AT OIL ACADEMY

¶1. (SBU) At approximately 09:30 local time gunfire was reported at the Azerbaijan Oil Academy, located in central Baku. This location is in between the Embassy Chancery and the Landmark Annex buildings. No Embassy personnel were at the site of the shooting or otherwise involved. Embassy preliminary information is that there are no American citizens involved, and that no Americans attend the Oil Academy as students or faculty. The Embassy has convened the Emergency Action Committee and sent out a warden message to the American community. The Embassy has also been in contact with local schools attended by Embassy children.

¶2. (SBU) The situation at the Oil Academy now appears to be under control, although the details of the investigation are not yet known. Press reports are unclear at this point regarding who the gunman was and how many people were killed and injured. Some early reports suggested that two or more gunmen entered the building, but later reports suggested a lone shooter. Early press reports indicated up to 22 people were killed and over 40 wounded. An official statement from the Ministry of Internal Affairs at 14:45 local time, however, states that 15 people are dead, with two more in critical condition, and possibly 40 more wounded. Hospitals are reportedly not allowing anyone other than victims into their facilities, including family members of the victims.

¶3. (SBU) The victims are both students and teachers, including one deputy rector of the university. ANS TV channel, whose journalists were given permission by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to enter the Oil Academy, is showing footage of police stepping over at least three dead bodies and carrying both body bags and wounded on stretchers out of the building. However, the Ministry of Health has confirmed only six people dead in their facilities.

¶4. (SBU) As for gunmen, press statements now suggest that there is a single gunman involved, who appears to have killed himself. Press reports indicate he was not an Azerbaijani citizen, although his nationality is yet to be determined. Initial reports suggested an African gunman; later reports speculated that the gunman's ethnicity was Syrian or Pakistani. Recent reports now say that he may be a Georgian citizen of Azeri origin. The motives for the shooting are still unclear. There is no indication of whether the gunman was a student at the academy or not.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: At a minimum this incident is a terrible tragedy in a society that has known little violence since the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict ended in 1994. The deputy minister of interior said publicly that this was a criminal act and not terrorism. It is clearly too early to know whether there

was a terrorist motivation behind this attack. The Azerbaijanis accused in the October 2007 failed attack on the U.S. Embassy are currently standing trial in Baku. The press has also reported that two Hezbollah terrorists are also in custody in Azerbaijan.

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